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Chairman: Mr. Wolfe ..... (Jamaica)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 62: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/62/71-E/2007/46, A/62/122 and A/62/168)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/62/61-E/2007/7, A/62/61/Add.1-E/2007/7/Add.1, A/62/132, A/62/132/Add.1, A/62/154, A/62/157, A/62/357 and A/C.3/62/L.4)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/62/131 and A/62/131/Corr.1)

1. **Ms. Zhang** Dan (China) said that the expansion of employment was an important element of China's macroeconomic and social development policy. The Chinese Government paid great attention to vocational training and re-employment of laid-off workers, while also working continuously to improve its unemployment insurance system. Thanks to China's rapid economic growth, 5 million unemployed workers had been re-employed in the past year, and the urban unemployment rate now stood at 4.1 per cent, below the world average. Her Government had also made vigorous efforts to improve the social security system with a view to establishing by 2020 a system that would cover all urban and rural residents. That would give China the world's largest social security system, covering more than 20 per cent of the global population.

2. Ageing was an acute problem for China, and safeguarding the rights and interests of the elderly was a great challenge. Over the past two decades, numerous laws and regulations had been put in place and ageing-related programmes had been implemented, creating a framework for a comprehensive legal and policy system for the ageing population. She hoped that the five-year review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing would lay a foundation for future action by her country on the issue. She also hoped that the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would foster more complete implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

3. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) said that social development was a priority for Egypt and underlined the importance of ensuring its full enjoyment by all peoples, but especially those in developing countries.

4. Full employment and decent work for all was a cornerstone of poverty eradication and social integration. The rise in unemployment around the world in the last decade had increased poverty and caused social disintegration, prompting growing migration of the global labour force and leading to brain drain from developing countries, as well as an increase in extremism, violence and crime. Combating unemployment was therefore essential for social stability. However, unemployment could not be overcome without tackling its underlying causes, which included external debt, disease pandemics, poor education, unqualified labour and low productivity.

5. The African continent had tried to deal with the problem by implementing the Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment and Poverty Alleviation, adopted at Ouagadougou in 2004. However, the international community bore equal responsibility with the developing countries for strengthening efforts towards the achievement of higher levels of social development, full employment and decent work for all. It had a role to play in enhancing Africa's capacity for job creation, upgrading the skills of its human resources and supporting its countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Developing countries, especially those in Africa, needed assistance in formulating national social and economic policies to strengthen sectors of production that might absorb a larger proportion of the labour force, particularly young people. Increased national and international financial resources were needed for that purpose, either through official development assistance or through domestic and foreign investment.

6. Assistance should be provided in particular to small enterprises, which were a major source of job creation. Special attention should also be given to guaranteeing a minimum wage and safeguarding workers' health and safety as essential conditions for economic and social security, which were threatened by the radical decrease in official development assistance for enhancing social services and infrastructure in Africa.

7. Egypt was striving to keep unemployment to a minimum through comprehensive national policies

aimed at raising the quality of education to international standards and providing training in fields that were essential to development. It had made significant strides towards gender equality in employment, and had also strengthened small enterprises; promoted business partnerships between Government, the private sector and workers; and improved social and health services for workers, all as part of an ambitious strategy for political, economic and social reform based on the concepts of social partnership and inclusion, diversity and joint effort.

8. **Mr. Ehrling** (Sweden), speaking as the youth representative of Sweden, said that young people should be viewed as a resource for innovation, development and economic growth. Half the world's population was under 26 years of age. Everyone must realize the potential inherent in that statement. The youth of the world deserved to be included in society and to have power over their own fate. Youth-led organizations could give them such power.

9. The greatest challenge facing his generation was climate change. As his country's youth representative, he felt proud of Sweden's efforts to promote a new global climate charter. Present and future generations needed an agreement stronger than the Kyoto Protocol. Swedish youth organizations would build on the Government's efforts by inviting fellow young people to a global conference on climate and security. That, he hoped, would be a first step towards involving young people in formulating global solutions to climate change.

10. Unemployment among young people was a huge challenge for all countries, regardless of location or development status. It led to social alienation and powerlessness. Young people just entering the job market sometimes needed special support, such as informal and vocational education, as a complement to formal education. Civil society organizations could help young people to realize their potential by giving them experience working in the non-profit sector, which could subsequently be put to use for jobs in commercial enterprise.

11. The global society was a reality, and outdated visa policies should not be allowed to stop people travelling to or searching for work in other countries. The right to freedom of movement enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights need not be at odds with the national security of nations. However, some people crossed borders not for work or holiday but in order to survive. Some fled from countries where people were killed for no other reason than loving a person of the same sex. A person's sexual preference should therefore be considered grounds for asylum.

12. The world could not afford to go on wasting the resource of youth. Young people were the key to development. He proposed that the Member States should adopt the goals and targets for the cluster "youth and the global economy" of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

13. **Ms. Rom** (Switzerland), speaking as the youth representative of Switzerland, said that realizing the potential of youth in a global economy meant guaranteeing their rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in particular three of those rights. First, everyone had the right to a decent standard of living, yet nearly half the young people in the world subsisted on less than two dollars a day, and not all of them lived in developing countries. In Switzerland, for instance, almost half of all social assistance recipients were children and young people. Fighting youth poverty was not only a moral duty but was in the best interest of societies, since it would contribute to social and political stability. Governments must acknowledge the problem of youth poverty, collect data on it and take action to ensure that young people enjoyed their right to a decent standard of living; they should work for that purpose in collaboration with young people themselves, who wished to be equal partners in the development of their societies.

14. Second, all young people had the right to education, which was essential if they were to become successful members of society. However, in some parts of the world girls and young women were frequently denied an education, and in many European countries Roma children of both sexes lacked equal access to the education system. Third, young people should enjoy the right to social protection. In developing countries, an estimated 85 per cent of young people were employed in the informal sector, where they were highly vulnerable to exploitation and dangerous working conditions. Microinsurance schemes could provide social protection, helping young people to

break out of the vicious cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

15. Laws guaranteeing young people's rights to a decent standard of living, education and social protection must be enacted, including legislation compelling non-State actors such as international corporations and financial institutions to fulfil their social responsibilities. A special effort must be made to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and young women and other vulnerable or marginalized groups. The World Programme of Action for Youth was an instrument for realizing the rights of young people; however, it did not cover all the major areas of importance today. She therefore called on Member States to adopt the proposed supplement to the World Programme (A/C.3/62/L.4).

16. **Mr. Romero-Martínez** (Honduras) noted that the Committee had before it numerous important issues, all of which deserved Member States' greatest attention. One was the protection of migrants' human rights, as highlighted in the Ministerial Declaration of the Group of 77 adopted in September 2007. Migrants were human beings who often migrated in search of a better life, and they deserved full respect and solidarity. Another critical issue was poverty and action to combat unemployment. Yet another issue deserving of the utmost attention was prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. Indifference to the problem must be overcome, and international efforts to address it must be stepped up. The First Lady of Panama led a global coalition of first ladies which was working to that end.

17. His delegation wholly supported efforts to achieve gender equality and uphold the rights of women. The United Nations should be the standard-bearer for the full and effective implementation of women's rights in every corner of the world. Member States' commitment to the family must be absolute. The needs of mothers and children — which were inextricably linked — ageing and disability were tangible realities that demanded swift and concrete action. Youth represented the present and the future of a better world and deserved special attention, as did protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

18. As President of the Executive Board of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), he was pleased to report that the Institute was overcoming its financial difficulties; he nevertheless urged Member States to continue supporting INSTRAW through voluntary contributions, which were its lifeblood.

19. **Mr. Del Rosario Ceballos** (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that productive employment and decent work for all were key elements for development and should therefore be a priority for international cooperation. The Rio Group countries were committed to their achievement, and to that end had instituted national policies and strategies, including social dialogue as an indispensable mechanism for promoting consensus and commitment. Unemployment was one of the principal causes of poverty, but the number of poor workers clearly showed that employment alone was not enough to ensure a decent standard of living.

20. Latin America and the Caribbean remained the most unequal region on the planet. Although most of the countries were middle-income countries, a large proportion of their populations still lived in poverty. While the countries of the region were taking steps to tackle the problem, in order to achieve the desired results, the international community should devise effective strategies for promoting economic growth, including improving fair competition through the elimination of subsidies and other international trade distortions. In Latin America, there was growing strategic cooperation between countries in a wide array of development-related areas, through technical cooperation, the exchange of best practices and other tools of South-South cooperation. Globalization obliged countries to work together to solve common problems and to continue developing mechanisms of international cooperation. The Rio Group attached particular importance to the commitment by the developed countries to devote 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development aid.

21. The private sector and civil society should be more involved in the design and implementation of strategies aimed not only at eradicating poverty and hunger but also at addressing other problems that affected vulnerable groups, particularly children and young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and indigenous peoples. Unemployment among young people remained a priority challenge to which the international community should respond by developing innovative and effective alternatives such as those proposed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/122), including the development of

small and medium-sized enterprises and the formation of cooperatives as a means of creating jobs.

22. The Rio Group wholeheartedly supported the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and reiterated its commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, welcoming the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. Finally, the Rio Group recognized the important contribution of migrants to the development of their countries of origin and destination and called on all States to ensure that their human rights were protected, regardless of their immigration status.

23. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that an ambitious social development agenda was being implemented in Qatar, centred on human resource development and respect for the human rights of all citizens. The areas of increased investment in infrastructure and social services included the family, young people, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

24. The United Nations Programme on the Family should focus primarily on improving national capacities for family policy development through collaboration between Member States, the United Nations system, civil society and other relevant actors, thus contributing to the attainment of the objectives of the International Year of the Family. Qatar was a sponsor of a draft resolution on the family at the current session, which sought to promote capacity development and to seek consensus rather than political divisions.

25. The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development had recently been established in Qatar with a view to addressing issues of global concern and supporting United Nations initiatives pertaining to the family. It aimed to focus on developing pragmatic measures that were beneficial to all countries, regardless of ideology.

26. With regard to youth, her delegation agreed with the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report (A/62/61) concerning the need to formulate national policies on youth and the labour market and to identify national priorities for action. Qatar had elaborated a national strategy for youth for the years 2008 to 2013 designed to achieve those goals, building on efforts under way since 2006.

27. The reports of the Secretary-General relating to social development rightly emphasized the need for capacity-building at the national level. Qatar stood ready to cooperate with United Nations programmes relating to the family, youth and ageing, particularly in the field of institutional development.

28. **Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh) welcomed the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/62/122, but said it was disheartening to note that inadequate progress had been made in implementing macroeconomic policies for employment growth and poverty reduction. More attention needed to be given to the situation of the rural poor and those who lacked social protection in the informal sector, particularly women.

29. Increased labour mobility had become an indispensable feature of the global economy, and policies in that area needed to be socially responsive and inclusive. For many developing countries, including Bangladesh, temporary labour migration helped to alleviate poverty. Given the close link between migration and development, renewed international efforts were necessary to facilitate the free movement of labour. In that regard, it was to be hoped that the necessary impetus would be given to the Mode IV negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

30. Bangladesh remained committed to achieving progress in all spheres of social development, in line with the objectives set out at the World Summit for Social Development and the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, an eight-point strategic agenda for accelerated poverty reduction was being implemented under the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), covering employment, nutrition, education, local governance, maternal health, sanitation and safe water, criminal justice and monitoring. Bangladesh had adopted a people-centred approach to development, combining public action, private initiatives and community mobilization.

31. Both the Government and civil society in Bangladesh recognized the central role of the family in development. Various family planning programmes had led to improvements in maternal health and substantial reductions in the birth rate and the child mortality rate. Microcredits granted to over 12 million people had contributed to poverty reduction. Bangladesh would be happy to share its experience in that regard with any

interested countries. It also stood ready to support any United Nations initiatives pertaining to family issues, in line with the recommendations in document A/62/132. International cooperation, together with capacity-building at the national level and through the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities, could help meet the goals of family policies.

32. Bangladesh had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and was in the process of ratifying it. However, developing countries would urgently need technical and financial support from the international community in order to implement it fully. Some 90 per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries could not attend school. It was therefore essential to mainstream disability issues into the international development agenda. Bangladesh had a national policy for persons with disabilities and had adopted the Disability Welfare Act in 2001. The Government had taken a number of steps to improve the situation of disabled persons, including the establishment of a quota for disabled persons at all levels of the civil service, the provision of financial assistance and the introduction of specialized education programmes and facilities.

33. Ageing remained a significant problem for developing countries. International cooperation and capacity-building were vital to the full implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. "Active ageing" policies could be useful in order to keep older people in the labour force in accordance with their capacities and preferences. However, developing countries lacked the resources for such initiatives; technical cooperation among Member States was therefore vital. In Bangladesh, some 5 million people were over the age of 60. The Ministry of Social Welfare was working to implement the poverty eradication component of the Madrid Plan of Action, including through the establishment of pension schemes.

34. Illiteracy among young people, particularly young women, was a significant problem. To improve the situation of the 45 million young people in Bangladesh, the major share of the national budget was allocated to education, which was free of charge up to grade 12. Bangladesh had achieved gender parity in primary and secondary schools, in line with the third Millennium Development Goal, and had the highest primary school enrolment rate in the developing world. Efforts were under way to promote adult literacy and non-formal education. In addition, the Government had adopted a national youth policy, in line with the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Her delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's observations in document A/62/168 regarding the need to promote employment opportunities for young people. In that context, it was necessary to introduce policies for the reduction of income inequality, the promotion of job security and the equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth.

35. Social development was a collective responsibility at both the national and international levels. The international community must therefore strengthen its efforts to supplement national initiatives through the involvement of all stakeholders.

36. **Archbishop Migliore** (Observer for the Holy See) said that, at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, States Members of the United Nations had affirmed the need to attack the structural roots of poverty, reduce inequality and marginalization and achieve full social integration. Subsequently, the focus of the international debate had shifted to global action to eradicate extreme poverty through the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the need for equity in financial and trade relations and various factors that generated or exacerbated poverty.

37. While that debate was important, it should be remembered that economic policies could not be separated from social policies if the goals of either were to be achieved. The years since the Copenhagen Summit had seen an increase in inequality between rich and poor and developed and developing countries, as well as within individual nations. In general, the benefits of global economic growth had not reached the poorer segments of society.

38. Only a few States had achieved the right balance between success in the global economy and the preservation of social protection. In many countries, both rich and poor, new forms of poverty had appeared, such as the loss of social relationships and networks among vulnerable groups. The Copenhagen Summit had foreseen those problems; for that reason, the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action continued to be relevant.

39. While the responsibility for social equity lay primarily with Governments, the international community had a part to play by creating trade and

financial conditions favourable to the growth of all national economies, assisting States in the development of policies to benefit the disadvantaged, promoting solidarity and empowering the poor.

40. Education formed the basis of all social policies. Its value went beyond economic development and the fulfilment of basic needs: it enabled individuals and peoples to establish relationships founded on mutual respect. It also bolstered action to combat corruption, which eroded the economic opportunities of the poorest, and helped create a legal framework that allowed the development of free enterprise while safeguarding the social and economic rights of all.

41. The eradication of poverty and the full enjoyment of basic social rights by all constituted a moral commitment. They should therefore be enshrined as the goals of all economic and development policies and as the measures of the success or failure of those policies.

42. **Ms. Aromaa** (Finland), speaking as the youth representative of Finland, said that young people had a key contribution to make to development and should be given an active role in combating climate change for tomorrow's world, which was being created by the decision-makers of today. They must not only be offered opportunities to participate in decision-making affecting their own lives but also have access to education and employment. In addition to formal education, non-formal education through youth organizations provided young people with the skills needed for them to assume responsibility in their communities. Unemployment, however, could hinder their integration into society. International organizations, national Governments and youth organizations should therefore work together to identify concrete ways and means of progressing on that front. The Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network and its Youth Consultative Group offered a good example of such cooperation.

43. Stressing that youth participation should not be a privilege of the happy few, she called on all Member States to honour the commitments made within the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Lastly, she urged them to take every possible action to reach a binding and strict agreement on the reduction of emissions, which was crucial for the planet and for the survival of future generations.

44. **Mr. Yousfi** (Algeria) said that the various reports of the Secretary-General on the issue of social development showed that the Copenhagen Declaration remained highly relevant, since its aims were far from being achieved. Although some progress had been made, poverty and unemployment continued to affect many regions of the world, in some cases fuelling violence and extremism which threatened international peace and security.

45. With a view to creating 2 million new jobs by 2012, his Government had introduced a number of programmes to help young people, new graduates and the unemployed find work, and a microcredit scheme aimed primarily at women. Those initiatives had already borne fruit: unemployment had fallen from 17.7 per cent to 12.3 per cent between 2004 and 2006. In addition, full social insurance coverage was guaranteed for all workers and their dependants. While Governments bore primary responsibility for the provision of full employment and decent work for all, international cooperation also had an important role to play in combating poverty and inequality by promoting a fair trade system, a favourable environment for investment and the free movement of capital and persons.

46. The problem of ageing affected developed and developing countries alike and was set to become more acute in the coming years. The situation of older persons, who continued to contribute to society even after they stopped working, should therefore remain a priority concern.

47. Disabled persons continued to face prejudice and discrimination which hampered their social integration. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was therefore a welcome development which would help improve the situation of disabled persons and protect them from discrimination. Algeria was proud to be among the first signatories of the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

48. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that her Government was committed to the social development goals established at the Copenhagen Summit and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and had adopted policies aimed at combining social development and economic growth. The "Fome Zero" (Zero Hunger) programme was aimed at hunger eradication and poverty reduction, while the "Bolsa Família" income transfer programme had helped lift 11 million families out of poverty. In addition, new forms of consumer lending were making credit

available to large sections of the population for the first time. Such initiatives were helping to build a more equitable and inclusive society and were contributing to economic growth. Unemployment had reached its lowest level since 1997, and more than 8 million jobs had been created in the past four years. The number of people affected by poverty had fallen significantly, and the first Millennium Development Goal was about to be achieved in Brazil, 10 years early.

49. The National Programme for Youth Inclusion would assist some 4 million young people aged 15 to 29 who had left school with few qualifications by providing them with financial support to complete their basic formal education and undertake professional training. Under the University for All Programme, established in 2004, more than 160,000 scholarships had been awarded in 2007, with a further 180,000 to be awarded in 2008.

50. In 2003, Brazil had adopted legislation governing the rights of persons over the age of 60. The Government's plan for the elderly included action to prevent violence and promote social inclusion. In addition, more than 1 million Brazilians over the age of 65 received allowances to supplement their family's income.

51. Brazil planned to invest over 1 billion dollars over the coming three years in programmes to benefit its 24 million disabled persons, such as a programme for the provision of special education facilities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol were expected to be ratified by Congress in the near future.

52. In the spirit of international cooperation, Brazil had launched the Action against Hunger and Poverty initiative in 2004, together with France, Chile and Spain. The first result of the initiative had been the establishment of the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID), designed to provide access at reduced prices to drugs for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

53. In line with the eighth Millennium Development Goal, Brazil called for a truly global partnership to overcome structural obstacles to growth and development. Good governance would not suffice to reduce poverty. The national efforts of poorer countries must be supported by official development assistance from developed countries and access to their markets, together with a financial architecture that was more favourable to development.

54. **Mr. Rachkov** (Belarus) said that the importance of social development in the work of the United Nations had been underlined in many important documents, such as the 2005 World Summit Outcome. At the same time, social conditions varied from one country to another; therefore, national measures to promote social development were also needed. Unemployment and social inequality were major obstacles to socio-economic development and required greater attention from States.

55. For more than 10 years, his Government had been implementing a policy of promoting economic growth while providing for the social needs of the population. Gross domestic product (GDP) was growing at an annual rate of over 10 per cent, and a sound social protection system was in place. According to a recent European Commission report Belarus had one of the lowest levels of unemployment in Europe, currently 1 per cent, against a backdrop of rising wages. Efforts to create jobs and promote entrepreneurship were focused on small and medium-sized towns and rural areas, with microfinance playing a key role.

56. His Government was taking action to promote the employment of persons with disabilities by compensating employers for the purchase of special equipment needed to accommodate disabled employees and by providing vocational training and grants for unemployed disabled persons. Measures were also being taken to expand employment in the agricultural sector through the establishment of new "agricultural settlements", the provision of further training and the promotion of independent businesses in rural areas.

57. Education and literacy were key contributors to socio-economic development. Annual expenditure on education amounted to 6 per cent of GDP, exceeding the level of spending in many developed countries. According to the *State of World Population 2007* report issued by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Belarus had one of the lowest levels of illiteracy in the world: only 1 per cent of women over the age of 15 were illiterate, while the incidence among men in the same age group was zero. Secondary education was free, and higher education was available free to all on the basis of competition. Special emphasis was given to ensuring equal educational opportunities for rural and urban youth.

58. Social policy in Belarus traditionally focused on measures to care for older persons, especially veterans of the Second World War. Four national laws and five State programmes were in place to provide older persons with social protection and an adequate standard of living.

59. Lastly, his delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding the need for universal social protection coverage and the importance of placing decent work for all at the centre of economic and social policymaking.

60. **Ms. Köberle** (Germany), speaking as a youth representative of Germany, said that in 2007 two events had marked the minds of young people in her country and throughout the world, namely the holding of the G-8 Summit and the attainment of the midpoint for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Throughout the year, young people had organized their own alternative summit meetings to raise their concerns about equality, the eradication of poverty and basic education for everyone. They believed that States had to seek multilateral responses to those challenges and to do so within the framework of the United Nations system. Young people could not accept that success in secondary school and at university should depend on social or family background; they demanded equal opportunities for all, and especially for disabled young people, migrants and minorities. The Roma, for example, continued to be the minority most subject to discrimination in Europe. Young people would be able to make better use of their potential, secure decent employment and overcome poverty if there was greater investment in both formal and non-formal education.

61. **Mr. Mack** (Germany), speaking as a youth representative of Germany, said that young people also wanted equal opportunities to benefit from globalization. International youth exchange was a prime means of combating racism and building peace, but visa restrictions prevented all but a few from crossing borders legally. The young were the world's greatest resource, but they needed to be empowered. They and their organizations were often one step ahead of politics and should be given a chance to participate in political life. The inclusion of youth delegates in the deliberations of the General Assembly should set an example for youth participation at local, regional and national levels.

62. He urged Member States to increase their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and also to ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. He appealed for a strong commitment to the United Nations Habitat Youth Fund and encouraged Governments to support the non-formal education work of youth-led organizations. Lastly, he called on delegates to adopt the supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth, as recommended by the Economic and Social Council (A/C.3/62/L.4).

63. **Mr. Lauritzen** (Denmark), speaking as the youth representative of Denmark, said that the collective progress of Member States towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals did not match their responsibilities and promises. To take the Goals forward, new tools and new ideas were needed, and for that reason youth had an essential part to play in the process. The Goals were the beginning, not the end, of global action: they had been created to serve future generations and were especially important to young people, who would be the leaders of tomorrow's world. Young people today were truly global citizens and had the energy and enthusiasm needed to make the world a better place; they wanted to assume the responsibilities that came with the opportunities offered by globalization. In Denmark, youth organizations across the political spectrum had, with the support of the Government and Parliament, set aside their ideological differences in order to sign together a Millennium Development Goals proposal, which could serve as a model for all Member States. He called on nations to work for, with and through young people in pursuing the Goals, combating poverty and disease and securing development and prosperity around the world.

64. **Mr. Dacri** (Italy), speaking as the youth representative of Italy, said that, because of competition and rapidly changing economic structures, there was a need for continuous innovations, not only in the economic sphere but also at the social and cultural level. Young people had an active part to play in both the national and international arenas and required high-level training to that end. International organizations set an example in that respect, as evidenced by the many United Nations system training centres operating in the city of Turin and the European Union's Erasmus programme.

65. In education as in other sectors, institutional cooperation was essential in order to implement the

recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development (A/62/122). Indeed, the Italian Government had recently recognized the importance of coherent youth policies and had set up a ministry with special responsibility in that area. The ministry had a coordinating role and acted within the framework of the National Youth Plan, which addressed the cultural, social and economic aspects of youth policies.

66. Economic policies must be specially geared to young people, with private sector support, in order to facilitate their access to employment, while education and training must take into account the needs of the labour market. The National Youth Plan accordingly sought to help young people to participate in the information society by narrowing the digital divide and to develop connectivity and Internet access, in particular through soft loans. In the same spirit of supporting the innovative potential of the young, the United Nations might wish to recommend the establishment of dedicated funds to develop their design skills and creative flair. He concluded by saying that the participation of youth representatives in the General Assembly's discussions should encourage Member States to support national youth councils and forums and involve them in decision-making on youth issues.

67. **Mr. Al Bayati** (Iraq), referring to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, said that human rights were the basis of human existence. Universal, interrelated and indivisible, they were moreover central to all that the United Nations hoped to achieve in the area of peace and development. For its part, the Government of Iraq was endeavouring to establish fresh development policies with the ultimate aim of strengthening the Iraqi economy and increasing prosperity. It was also seeking to improve living standards and reduce poverty through a variety of social assistance measures and the socio-economic development of rural and remote areas. Such development plans, however, were hampered by the country's difficult security situation, which had also contributed to higher unemployment. The terrorist activities of Al-Qaida and remnants of the former regime made matters even worse, targeting as they did Iraq's infrastructure and its professional classes in particular, which had adverse economic consequences in view of the resulting brain drain and flow of capital abroad.

68. Responsibility for addressing the security issue extended to include the international community. The Iraqi Government was nevertheless making efforts to create stability and improve family life with the assistance of up-to-date information and statistics on households. To that same end, coordination was also continuing among the relevant ministries and with various Arab and international organizations, including the United Nations, and the major goals of full productive employment and decent work for all were being incorporated into the country's development policies and strategies, which demanded the mobilization of all available resources. Another important measure was the five-year International Compact with Iraq (ICI), aimed at building a secure, unified, federal and democratic nation, pursuant to which the Iraqi Government was committed to combating corruption, establishing a solid budgetary framework and strengthening national institutions.

69. In short, his Government was determined to extricate Iraq from its current predicament and produce a key change in development policies. It also looked forward, however, to international assistance for the reconstruction and development of a new Iraq. Goodwill, open minds and mutual respect were moreover vital ingredients for the return of the Iraqi people to the international fold.

70. **Mr. Llanos** (Chile) said that social protection policies were needed, in addition to economic growth, in order to alleviate poverty and address the needs of vulnerable members of society. Growth did not always generate employment. Indeed, statistics showed that, both in Chile and worldwide, as economic growth increased, job creation decreased. Furthermore, the generation of employment did not necessarily mean socially protected and better paid jobs. Nor did economic growth automatically lead to lesser income inequality, which was shown by the Gini Index to be unaffected by wide variations in growth rates. The prime concern must therefore be to ensure a State system of social benefits for all citizens throughout their lives, giving them access to education and employment and protection against ill health and disability. In the context of globalization, social protection must be a core thrust of State action.

71. Chile had made significant advances in poverty reduction in 17 years of democratic governance, with the proportion of those living below the poverty line falling in that period from 40 to 13.7 per cent of the population. It had achieved that result through a three-pronged system of social protection. Under the "Chile solidario" programme, it provided social benefits for street people, elderly persons living by themselves and other groups at risk. Under the "Chile Crece Contigo" programme, it provided early childhood protection, particularly in low-income households or in families with working mothers, offering them free day-nursery facilities and ensuring the universally recognized rights of all children. The third prong consisted of the guarantee of socially protected employment for men and women and the introduction of a universal pension system. Through the adoption of all those measures, the Government of Chile was overcoming poverty and had practically attained all the Millennium Development Goals. He stressed that the example of his country showed how much could be achieved when the State played an active role in implementing social policies to combat poverty and provide social protection for all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable.

72. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) said that his country fully subscribed to all international commitments in the area of social development and had, accordingly, introduced a policy to assist disabled persons and those living in poverty, including older persons.

73. His Government had adopted legislation to protect disabled persons in Gabon, estimated to be about 10,000 in 1997. Its assistance was twofold, consisting of material aid, in the form of orthopaedic and other equipment, as well as financial aid, in the form of a special allowance. To respond to persons with special needs, it had established a national school for children with hearing problems and a unit for the mentally handicapped in the Libreville regional hospital. At the international level, it had signed the agreement establishing the African Rehabilitation Institute (ARI) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. The Government's main aim was to guarantee the independence of disabled persons and integrate them into society.

74. In line with the Madrid International Plan of Action, adopted in 2002, the Government has undertaken to implement strategies to prevent the marginalization of older people to ensure that they would be cared for by their family or, alternatively, specialized institutions. Its aim was to create an "ageless society", in accordance with its tradition of respect for older persons.

75. In addition to those measures to protect vulnerable groups of the population, the Government had just overhauled its social security system with a view to providing universal health coverage and had set up a National Sickness Insurance Fund. Extreme poverty was one of the most serious challenges facing the world. In that connection, the launching of the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group was a very positive step. Despite all their efforts, African countries still suffered from a lack of resources. The fact that Gabon had been classified as a medium-income country placed it in a particularly difficult position because it no longer benefited from facilities granted other developing countries and devoted 40 per cent of its budgetary resources to reimbursing its debt.

76. **Ms. Nerland** (Norway), speaking as the youth representative of Norway, said that lack of access to clean water and safe sanitation was one of the greatest challenges facing the world and had an enormous impact on the lives of millions of children and young people. In negotiations within the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), certain States were requesting that water services should be liberalized and opened up to foreign corporations. However, there had been many examples of rising prices and reduced access to water in countries with privatized water systems. Water was not a commodity that could be easily replaced by another. The problem was not privatization as such. Unfortunately, business considerations often took precedence over the best interests of individuals, including children and young people. Any decision-making process concerning the use of water should include the population as a whole.

77. Young people should be allowed to make informed decisions about matters affecting their lives, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Governments should take steps to ensure that their voice was heard at the local, regional and national levels.

78. Finally, Member States should be encouraged to support financially the "Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-led Development", established by the Governing

Council of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlement Foundation (UN-Habitat).

79. **Ms. Dikáčová** (Slovak Republic), speaking as the youth representative of the Slovak Republic, said that more than two thirds of young people were living in Africa and Asia and that many of them had no access to primary education, good health and fundamental human rights. Others were facing social instability, a lack of financial resources and other obstacles such as racism or xenophobia, all of which had a negative influence on their participation in the economic and social system.

80. Young people were able to devise original and innovative solutions and act as key stakeholders in various areas of social and economic life. They should therefore be given the opportunity to be equal partners in decision-making processes at all levels. To that end, she called on Member States to grant young people access to education corresponding to the needs of the labour market and to create societies that showed respect for fundamental human rights.

81. She also urged Member States to implement the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, entitled "Follow-up to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond" (A/62/61/E/2007/7).

82. **Mr. Kingston** (New Zealand), said that his Government had three strategic priority themes for the next decade: economic transformation; national identity; and families — young and old. The latter had five interdependent sub-themes, one of which was "positive ageing". All those themes informed Government-wide planning processes.

83. The Government's commitment to the "families — young and old" priority theme had resulted in additional funding for programmes to assist older people, including increased funding for home-based support services and residential care.

84. New Zealand had established an Office for Senior Citizens in 1990 which led, monitored and promoted the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy. It also developed policy to protect the rights and interests of older people.

85. New Zealand recognized the importance of consulting regularly with older people in the community on policy development issues. By encouraging them to continue participating in their communities, it ensured that all New Zealanders benefited from their valuable knowledge, skills and experience.

86. **Mr. Groom** (Australia), speaking as the youth representative of Australia, said that climate change was one of the greatest concerns of young people throughout the world. Young people were able to adapt their behaviour more easily than others, and the world should harness their energy by strengthening the role of education and training in global climate change solutions. For example, Australian youth had embraced the need to reduce water shortage as a result of widespread water education in schools.

87. In Australia, a number of young people were mobilizing to help others less fortunate than themselves, such as indigenous youth and new migrants. Many young people belonged to the Australian Make Poverty History movement. However, there were still many marginalized young people who felt isolated from society, and they needed attention, especially at the United Nations. He hoped that the resolution entitled "Supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond" (A/C.3/62/L.4) would be adopted.

88. The Australian Government's Youth Ambassadors for Development Program (AYAD) had enabled 2,100 young Australians to make a positive contribution to development throughout the Asia-Pacific region. It was important that young people should feel that the United Nations was listening to them, and the youth delegate programme was an important step towards that goal. He urged all Member States to consider including a youth representative in their delegations to the United Nations.

89. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia) said that people-centred development, a key message of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, remained as relevant in 2007 as then. Although the world had made great efforts to implement the Programme of Action adopted at the Social Summit, it was important not to lose sight of the uneven progress across and within regions.

90. Climate change was a daunting challenge, and the United Nations Climate Change Conference, scheduled to be held in Bali in December 2007, would provide a much-needed opportunity for international cooperation on that issue.

91. Indonesia was concerned about the economic insecurity of migrant workers, especially women workers, in labour markets throughout the world and urged States to promote equal rights and opportunities for that category of workers.

92. For its part, Indonesia was committed to social progress and was earmarking the largest share of its development budget to education, health and anti-poverty programmes. It had also taken steps to promote cooperative activities by developing small and medium-sized enterprises.

93. Believing that a nation's prosperity and a healthy family structure were inextricably linked, Indonesia had adopted a twin strategy combining individual efforts of families with Government policy. Through its national action plan on disabilities, it continued to raise the public's awareness of disabled persons as productive members of society, and it also dispensed vocational training. The National Commission on Ageing worked closely with the Ministry of Social Affairs in highlighting issues related to ageing at the national level and cooperated with provincial governments at the local level. The Government also recognized the role of young people in poverty eradication and sought to empower them through various initiatives such as the Youth Employment Network.

94. Indonesia welcomed the adoption of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, to which it was a signatory. It called on the international community to comply with its commitment to put an end to the existing economic insecurity and inequality brought about by globalization. The United Nations should continue to advocate the strengthening of national capacity as a core contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and it was vital that there should be coherence between the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.